



- A branch clinic of the Walter Reed
National Military Medical Center

Tips to Prevent Holiday Stress and Depression

- 1) Acknowledge Your Feelings** – It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.
- 2) Reach Out** – If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events. Volunteering your time to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.
- 3) Be Realistic** – The holidays don't have to be perfect or like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones.
- 4) Set Aside Differences** – Try to accept family members and friends as they are. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time, and be understanding.
- 5) Stick to a Budget** – Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend.
- 6) Plan Ahead** – Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list.
- 7) Learn to Say “No”**– Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity.
- 8) Don't Abandon Healthy Habits** – Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks.
- 9) Take a Breather** – Make some time for yourself. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm.
- 10) Seek Professional Help If You Need It** – Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

